

O 262216Z DEC 89
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1562
INFO SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 19932

SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: A FARC AMBUSH KILLS 10 MILITARY IN META

¶1. (U) AN AMBUSH BY A GUERRILLA COLUMN ON AN ARMY CONVOY KILLED TEN MILITARY IN LA PICOTA HILL, META DEPARTMENT IN THE EASTERN PLAINS, DECEMBER 23. THE INCIDENT OCCURRED WHILE A SEVENTH BRIGADE PATROL SEARCHED FOR THE 250-MAN GUERRILLA UNIT, BELIEVED TO BELONG TO THE FARC GUERRILLAS. THE ARMY UNIT, BASED IN THE DEPARTMENTAL CAPITAL OF VILLAVICENCIO, HAD DETECTED THE PRESENCE OF THE GUERRILLA GROUP IN NORTHEASTERN META. AS THE THREE VEHICLES TRANSPORTING THE MILITARY REACHED LA PICOTA HILL, DYNAMITE CHARGES PRE-POSITIONED ON THE ROUTE DETONATED UNDER THE TWO LEADING VEHICLES. THE GUERRILLAS CONCEALED IN THE AREA SURROUNDING THE BOMBING SITE THEN LOOSED A FUSILLADE OF AUTOMATIC FIRE ON THEIR VICTIMS, SOME OF WHOM MANAGED TO FIRE BACK. THE NUMBER OF ARMY WOUNDED REMAINS UNDISCLOSED BUT IS REPORTEDLY HEAVY. THE NEW COMMANDER OF THE SEVENTH BRIGADE, GENERAL LUIS FRANCISCO CORREA CASTANEDA, IMMEDIATELY ASSUMED CHARGE OF AN ARMY PURSUIT OPERATION WHICH AS OF DECEMBER 26 HAD FAILED TO MAKE CONTACT.

¶2. (U) THIS IS THE SIXTH (AND WORST) AMBUSH IN 1989 BY THE FARC ON POLICE OR MILITARY UNITS IN META DEPARTMENT, A REGION WITH A HEAVY FARC PRESENCE. TOTAL DEAD ON THE SIDE OF THE SECURITY FORCES FROM GUERRILLA AMBUSHES IN META IS FIFTEEN MILITARY AND TWO POLICE. IN THE LAST FIFTEEN MONTHS (SINCE OCTOBER 1988), GUERRILLA GROUPS HAVE KILLED A TOTAL OF FORTY NINE MILITARY AND POLICE IN SIMILAR AMBUSHES NATIONWIDE.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: THE CONTINUING EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE DYNAMITE ATTACKS POINTS UP THE ABIDING INABILITY OF THE ARMED FORCES TO EMPLOY BASIC TACTICS THAT WILL PROTECT THEM FROM AMBUSHES, ESPECIALLY IN NORTHERN COLOMBIA.

MCLEAN